

**RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAC)**  
**FINAL MINUTES**  
**August 23, 2005**

**Manor House**  
**415 E. Highway 70**  
**Safford, Arizona**

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Sandee McCullen, Lorraine Eiler, Jay Adkins, Lee Aitken, Steve Saway, Frances Werner, Glen Collins, Lamar Smith, Jan Holder, Tina Clark, Carolyn Loder, Peggy Titus, Bob Broscheid (AGFD, Governor's Liaison to RAC)

**ABSENT:** Thomas Kelly, Bill Branan, Larry Nelson

**BLM STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:**

Elaine Zielinski, Mike Taylor, Bill Civish, Bill Brandau, Cindy Alvarez, Tim Smith, Teri Raml, Bill Coulloudon, Ron Hooper, Clay Templin, Diane Drobka

**PRESENTERS & GUESTS:**

Mike Epperson, visitor; Jim Maynard, Arizona Cattle Growers; Pete Brawley, local rancher and member of Gila Watershed Partnership

**AGENDA ITEM: Meeting called to Order.** (Frances Werner, RAC Chairperson)  
Welcome and Introduction of RAC Members.

**DISCUSSION:** The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m. on the morning of August 23, 2005, at the Manor House in Safford, Arizona. Frances thanked everyone for attending. Greetings and introductions were then made around the room. Frances noted that this is the last meeting for several of the RAC members. State Director Zielinski welcomed Bob Broscheid as the newly appointed representative from the Governor's Office. He is the head of the Habitat Section of the Wildlife Division in the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

**AGENDA ITEM: Review May 3, 2005, meeting minutes.**

**DISCUSSION:** Add Tourism Committee meeting minutes, other changes

**ACTION:** Approval of minutes as corrected: Sandee 1<sup>st</sup>, Lorraine 2<sup>nd</sup>, unanimous approval.

**AGENDA ITEM: BLM State Director's Introduction, Update on Legislation, Regulations, and other Statewide Issues.** (Elaine Zielinski, BLM Arizona State Director and other BLM staff.)

**DISCUSSION: TALKING POINTS**

- **Welcome:** Greetings and thank you for traveling to Safford to participate in today's meeting and tomorrow's field trip. Before we get started, I just want to highlight a few statewide issues. In the Field Manager Reports, you also received a number of other updates that you will have an opportunity to ask questions about later this afternoon.
- **Introduction of New Managers/Staff:** We have some new managers in the Arizona State Leadership team. Some are new managers from other states and two are managers you already know. Starting with new managers, we have Bonnie Hogan, the new Deputy State Director for Business and Support Services. Bonnie just arrived in Phoenix and began working with us on July 1. Bonnie comes to us from Wyoming, where she was the Deputy State Director for Support Service and Fire for the last two and half years. Patrick Madigan has been selected to become the new Tucson Field Manager. Patrick is the Acquisitions Coordinator for the Wyoming State Office. He will be reporting to Tucson on September 18. In addition, we recently announced the selection of Scott Florence to become the new Arizona Strip District Manager. Scott is senior planner in Washington D.C., and has had extensive field experience in Nevada, California, New Mexico and Oregon. He is arriving in mid-October.

Most of you know Bill Civish as the Safford Field Manager. However, his title has changed and he is now the Gila District Manager and will now have management oversight of the Safford and Tucson field offices and the San Pedro Project Office. Phoenix Field Manager Teri Raml is now the Phoenix District Manager. She will continue to supervise the Phoenix staff under a slightly different reorganization. As you probably know, Arizona Strip Field Manager Roger Taylor retired.

Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and New Mexico are all going back to the three-tier structure.

- **Arizona Organizational Effectiveness Update:** Scott Florence, Bill Civish and Teri Raml's new positions are part of the BLM organizational effectiveness strategy. We're making a lot of progress in implementing the strategy and the three-tier organization, which will include four district-level offices in Arizona. We have received Washington approval on all of the District-level organizations, including the Colorado River District, which includes the Kingman, Lake Havasu, and Yuma field offices; the Gila District, which includes the Safford and Tucson Field Offices; the Arizona Strip District, which includes the Arizona Strip Field Office (which includes the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument) and the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument; and last but not least, the Phoenix District, which includes the Hassayampa Field Office and South Sonoran Field Office.

In addition, we continue to make some organizational changes in the Arizona State Office to improve our internal and external customer service.

- **2005 Fire Season:** This was a very unusual fire season. We are still anticipating additional fires even though we are technically in the monsoon. Nationally, more acres have burned than any other year. So far, 259 fires burned 306,000+ acres. Fire program was very proactive in education to alert people to the dangerous fire season; PFO especially active in this.
- **Antiquities Centennial:** We continue to make progress in planning the 2006 Antiquities Centennial. As we've mentioned before, the Four Corners states, along with the rest of the Bureau, are planning a number of on-the-ground events to highlight cultural resource protection and preservation. Arizona will focus on a number of hands-on projects during the 2006

Archaeology Month celebration which is held in March in partnership with the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office. The Archaeology Expo will be held on March 3-4 at Tubac State Historical Park. In addition, the BLM's National Public Lands Day events will highlight cultural resources and provide numerous opportunities for the public to participate on "hands on" projects protect and preserve cultural resources. BLM Washington will develop a number of products and activities to support the field events, including traveling exhibits and cultural resources awareness information. Another recent exciting development is that the Smithsonian has accepted BLM's proposal to produce and display an exhibit of BLM's cultural and paleontological resources. The exhibit will be displayed in the Smithsonian's Ripley Center from December 6 to February 7. We'll keep you posted as other events that develop. We are also asking Governor Napolitano to do a Proclamation.

- **Resolution Copper Exchange Proposal:** The Senate introduced S. 1122 - the Southeast Arizona Land Exchange and Conservation Act of 2005, to authorize and direct the exchange and conveyance of land between the United States and Resolution Copper Company. The Resolution Copper Project is located near Superior, Arizona, in Pinal County. The present operations are being conducted under a mining plan of operation with the Tonto National Forest. Resolution Copper has proposed, as an alternative to operating under a plan of operation, a land exchange with the Forest Service. Although BLM will be coordinating with the Southwestern Region and Tonto National Forest on the mineral valuation of this proposed exchange, BLM's role will be minor. If the legislation passes, the BLM will receive a couple of parcels in the Tucson Field Office. The parcels are near the Las Cienegas and the San Pedro River. The mine is potentially a huge development near Superior.
- **Wild Horse and Burro Sale Authority Resumed:** On May 19, the BLM resumed its sales of wild horses and burros affected by a new Federal law after revising its bill of sale and pre-sale negotiation procedures. These changes will strengthen the agency's efforts in finding good homes for the animals that must be sold. The BLM is also working to persuade all three U.S. horse processing plants to refuse to buy any BLM freeze-branded horses sold under the new law (Public Law 108-447). BLM temporarily suspended its sales on April 25, 2005, in response to two incidents involving the commercial processing of horses that had been re-sold or traded after being bought from the BLM.

Approximately 1,360 horses and burros have been sold since BLM was authorized by Congress to sell them. Since the sale authority was resumed, 410 have been sold. In addition, BLM has received commitments to sell an additional 126 horses.

- **Mining Claim Fee Increase:** The location fee for newly located mining claims or sites has been restored from \$25 to \$30 per mining claim or site. In addition, the annual maintenance fee has been restored from \$100 to \$125 per mining claim or site. Mining claim holders must pay a \$30 location fee and a \$125 maintenance fee for all mining claims and sites recorded on or after June 30, 2005.

The BLM reduced the fees on December 8, 2004, as directed by statute. The statute further provided that the fees would return to their formerly increased levels when the BLM had met certain conditions. These conditions have now been met and the fees have returned to the levels that are reflected in the regulations found at 43 CFR 3830.21 (2004). The annual maintenance fee due September 1, 2005, is \$125 per mining claim or site as reflected in the current regulations.

- **Proposed Regulatory Changes to Recover Costs:** On July 19, the BLM published proposed regulatory changes in the *Federal Register* (FR) that would enable the agency to recover costs in processing documents related to mineral operations on public lands. The regulatory proposal would authorize the BLM to increase existing or set new fees for environmental-impact studies, monitoring activities, and other processing-related actions. The FR notice allows for a 30-day comment period that ended on August 18. The proposal responds to recommendations by the Department's Inspector General, which found that the BLM needs to do more to recover its document-processing costs. The BLM estimates that once the cost recovery regulations are implemented, the agency will recover about \$23.5 million more annual in mineral processing receipts than it receives under existing regulations.
- **Energy Bill Signed:** The Energy Bill was signed on August 8. The bill creates a new and extensive workload for BLM. The Bill addresses a wide variety of commodities and will require the BLM to prepare many reports and regulations. The BLM will also be required to develop Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with other agencies and institute changes to a variety of work processes. The initial implementation of the Energy Bill will require effective management oversight. Ray Brady in the BLM Washington Office has been assigned as the Energy Bill Implementation Project Manager to provide this oversight and lead a Project Management Team. Additional Washington and field staff will be assigned to this team on a full-time basis. It is estimated that this team will need to remain in place for up to two years.
- **Interior Appropriations Bill Signed:** The Interior Appropriations Bill was signed on August 2, which means the BLM, and all other Interior agencies, except for the Bureau of Reclamation, will have a budget to start the new fiscal year. We are very excited to have it signed so early. There is a high focus on energy and minerals. Arizona's budget stayed flat, which means a decrease when COLA factored in, but overall Arizona is fairing well.
- **BLM and Partners to be featured at White House Conference:** On August 29-31, 2005, representatives from the Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership (SVPP), a group of government and nongovernmental agencies and individuals, instrumental in the development of the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area planning effort, will be featured at the White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation in St. Louis, MO. Representatives from the public and private sectors have been invited to consider the advancement of the cooperative conservation vision. The Departments of the Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Defense and the Environmental Protection Agency are co-hosting the event. BLM Community Planner Karen Simms will attend as the agency representative along with members of the SVPP. The group will host a booth and participate in a panel discussion. The group attending the conference will also be recognized by BLM Director Kathleen Clarke at a media event scheduled for Saturday, August 27, at the Phoenix Zoo.
- **Grazing Rule Changes Supplemental EIS:** On August 10, BLM announced it will prepare a supplement to the final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) on proposed changes to its grazing regulations. The supplemental FEIS will primarily address the Fish and Wildlife Service comments on the proposed grazing changes. The BLM's grazing regulatory proposal is aimed at improving the agency's management of grazing on 160 million acres of public lands. More specifically, the proposed rule seeks to: improve the agency's working relationships with public land ranchers, conserve rangeland resources, and enhance administrative efficiency.

- **ASO Relocation – New Building:** The Arizona State Office employees are getting closer to moving into our new space in the Phelps Dodge Tower located at One North Central Avenue. We will be leasing all of the 7<sup>th</sup> and part of the 8<sup>th</sup> floor to house the 165 State Office employees. In addition, we have leased 1,012 square feet on the first floor to house the Public Lands Information Center. Construction is well underway, and we are anticipating occupying the new office space by September 30, 2005. The building is not owned by Phelps Dodge; they are just another tenant in the building.

#### **COMMENTS (on all of above)**

Appropriations – RTP funds increase. Recreation groups supported. (Sandee)

White House Conference – BLM AZ at top of list. Collaborative Planning workshop in San Diego featured BMG route planning. AZ being recognized as out front and forward planner.

Frances – Malpai Borderlands Group also going to White House conference.

- **RAC Recognition and Awards:** Elaine recognized the five out-going RAC members, presenting each with a plaque honoring their service. She thanked them for getting involved in the RAC and dedicating their time over the past three years to BLM issues. “All of us at BLM appreciate your leadership and interest in building a stronger collaborative process in managing Arizona’s public land resources.” Four of the five outgoing members were present: Steve Saway – Off-Highway Vehicle Use representative, Frances Werner (Chair) and Glen Collins – Dispersed Recreation representatives, and Lamar Smith – Academia of Natural Resources representative. Mayor Larry Nelson – Elected Official was absent. “Because of your interest and participation, the BLM has received some excellent advice in several management areas. Thank you again.”

**AGENDA ITEM: Saginaw Hill Update.** Cindy Alvarez, Acting BLM Tucson Field Manager, presented a PowerPoint discussion of the issues surrounding the contamination at Saginaw Hill and how the BLM is responding to the situation.

**DISCUSSION:** RAC members asked many questions. Frances mentioned how the area’s use has changed over the years: from mining, to target practice, to ATV use, to mountain bike use and rock collecting. Users aren’t tolerant of each other. Glen also acknowledged the BLM’s history of management of this site and how it has changed, and commented that he is impressed with the BLM’s response. Bill Civish mentioned that Congressman Grijalva has been very supportive of getting funding of the project.

**ACTION:** None

(Mike Taylor’s presentation on Land Use Planning moved to later in day.)

**AGENDA ITEM: Gila Watershed Partnership.** Jan Holder, RAC Representative – Dispersed Recreation, discussed the Gila Watershed Partnership’s goals and successes and presented Powerpoint photos of projects and accomplishments.

**DISCUSSION:** Bob commented on the Farm Bill funding, explaining how state and federal funding can be used on a watershed approach. He specifically mentioned the Wetland Reserve Program and EQUIP (Environmental Quality Incentive Program) to improve water quality. Definition has limited its use in Arizona somewhat. There is lots of competition for grants; AZ very low on list for farm grants.

Wildlife Incentive Program: retiring farmlands for wetlands conservation. Bob will keep RAC up to speed on new developments.

Carolyn asked about how to develop working relationship with Corps of Engineers. Jan: takes time to build relationships. Bill Brandau shared how the Gila Watershed Partnership took a trip with County, City, BLM, etc. to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in San Francisco when they felt we weren't getting a timely response.

Steve asked about federal and state as members in Gila Watershed Partnership; Jan said that everyone is considered a voting member.

Frances asked how the state was divided into watershed areas. Jan explained that the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) did the map. There are also sub-watersheds. There are currently 13 recognized watershed groups.

**ACTION:** None

#### **AGENDA ITEM: Public Comment Period**

**DISCUSSION:** Pete Brawley followed up on Jan's presentation, stressing the importance of partnerships and bringing everyone into the process early.

Jim Maynard mentioned that there is a Farm Bill Listening Session in Las Cruces on Friday, Aug. 26.

**ACTION:** None

**AGENDA ITEM: Arizona Planning Updates.** Michael Taylor, DSD for Resources, presented a statewide overview:

Lake Havasu Plan – credit to Tim for getting it moving. We are poised to get it out the door. Working closely with AGFD; contributed funding for planning position. AGFD above and beyond; really appreciate them. Litigation over burros at Alamo Lake has been resolved by considering herd management as part of plan. This plan is furthest down the line; presentation for Elaine and WO planning staff. Final briefing with AGFD (Duane Shroufe) and Elaine soon. New hire at ASO Resources, Julie Decker.

Tim Smith provided dates for upcoming public meetings after the meeting:

Oct. 24	10 a.m.-noon	Bouse – Bouse Booster Community Hall
	2-4 p.m.	Salome, Brenda, Wenden, Alamo Lake – Salome High School
Oct. 25	9-11 a.m.	Phoenix – Arizona State Office
	4-6 p.m.	Parker, Parker Strip Area – La Paz County Supervisors Office
Oct. 26	4-6 p.m.	Lake Havasu City – Council Chambers
Oct. 27	4-6 p.m.	Bullhead City, Mohave Valley, Ft. Mojave, Needles, Topock, Golden Shores Mohave Community College
Oct. 31	1-3 p.m.	Riverside, CA – BLM California Desert District Office in Moreno Valley

Next plans are Agua Fria, Harquahala, and Grand Canyon-Parashant/Arizona Strip.

Briefings on these for RAC soon.

Grand Canyon-Parashant is in partnership with the NPS; both BLM and NPS must approve.

Sonoran Desert Plan out to public with preliminary alternatives.

Yuma Plan – presentation to RAC and good input.

Yuma Rod and Gun Club and Desert Bighorn Sheep Society complimented BLM on plan.

Ironwood Plan – Asked for more time for public outreach. They have working groups and a very collaborative process. Bumping to next calendar year for draft.

The Gila District will do one RMP:

06 – scoping for Tucson lands.

07 – scoping for Safford lands.

Then write a Districtwide Plan.

Diane mentioned that the Safford Field Office is in the middle of the Aravaipa Ecosystem Management Plan.

**DISCUSSION:** Bob discussed how BLM and AGFD work together on plans, especially when Critical Habitat is involved. Southwestern Willow Flycatcher habitat was a specific example.

Frances mentioned Twinkle Thompson's *Desk Guide to Cooperating Agency Relationships* as an excellent publication that everyone should have. Diane said that the BLM could provide copies to everyone.

**ACTION:** ASO to mail copies of *Desk Guide to Cooperating Agency Relationships* to RAC members.

#### *LUNCH BREAK*

**AGENDA ITEM: San Simon Watershed and Tour Highlights.** Bill Brandau, Acting Safford Field Manager, gave a powerpoint presentation as a prelude to tomorrow's tour. He discussed watershed uses, issues, historic erosion, and restoration.

**DISCUSSION:** When asked about the root causes of the erosion, Bill said that this was just a brief overview and that more details would be provided during the tour tomorrow when everyone can see the problems firsthand.

**ACTION:** None

**AGENDA ITEM: BLM Field Managers Field Office Rangeland Resource Team Member Proposals**

**DISCUSSION:** Nothing presented.

**ACTION:** None

**AGENDA ITEM:** RAC Questions on Field Manager Reports (Reports are attached at the end of minutes.)

**DISCUSSION:** Frances asked for RAC questions. There were none. Bill Brandau gave update on the gate issue at the east end of Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness. The gate may not be open for hunting season.

**ACTION:** None

**AGENDA ITEM: Report from the Standards & Guidelines Working Group** (Lamar Smith, Chair)

**DISCUSSION:** Bill Coulloudon provided a handout with changes in the proposed Revised Grazing Rule.

Lamar (and Phil Ogden) had concerns they expressed with The Nature Conservancy. Concerns about keeping procedures uniform instead of having a unique system for each watershed/ecosystem/allotment. Philosophical concern about using outside organization to do monitoring and interpretation; doesn't have problem with contractors for data collection but not interpretation and recommendations. Phil sent copies of Dave Gorey's monitoring report to RAC members. Bill Civish said that BLM will do a side-by-side comparison. Lamar has concerns that monitoring is being used as a compliance tool; that has some value that he is willing to accept but we need to get people out on the ground communicating instead of relying solely on the data from monitoring. He is concerned about value judgment affecting data. He doesn't want to see BLM's own resource professionals not being intimately involved with others that are collecting the data.

Example: Sonoran Desert NM literature review – lots of information in people's heads that is not being included; listen to people who have experience on the ground.

Frances mentioned a field day to be held on Las Cienegas so that everyone could look at it on the ground together. Phil Ogden has already gathered information from Mac Donaldson and is collating data from the west pasture.

Frances honored Lamar for his mentoring of the Standards and Guidelines group. She also acknowledged Ron Hooper and Bill Coulloudon for their assistance. Frances presented Lamar a t-shirt with a photo of Bill Branan and his burro. Lamar also thanked Deborah Stevens for her assistance with the RAC through the years. Lamar and Frances talked about the good working relationships within the RAC, and how they have worked together to resolve issues. Lamar mentioned that they have been lucky to have good BLM people to work with. Mike Taylor commended Lamar as the "grandfather" of the S&G team and thanked him for making a difference.

**ACTION:** None

**AGENDA ITEM: RAC Discussion on Public Relations Working Group** (Steve Saway, Chair)

**DISCUSSION:** Steve handed out the RAC Notes and said that there still may be a few editorial fixes. Deborah can send out when she gets back. E-mail Steve with corrections ASAP.

**ACTION:** None



**AGENDA ITEM: Recreation Working Group** (Tina Clark, Chair)

**DISCUSSION:** Discussed national recreation RAC; there might be one AZ rep. Group asked Don Applegate to update some recreation publications. Working group wants a PR piece about BLM recreation sites (rack card or small brochure) that can be used with AOT outreach. Glen asked to put together a list of the BLM's best recreation assets. Tina commented that, in Yuma, they need a publication that has information about BLM recreation sites statewide since it is a gateway into Arizona. The BLM needs a strategy to partner to jointly promote tourism in gateway communities. De Anza Trail – Tina attended the Juan Batista de Anza Trail conference in Mexico. California has done a good job of signage along the road that is the De Anza Trail. Of the 600 miles in AZ, 400 are on BLM lands. Not much signage at all. It's a National Parks Trail but crosses BLM lands. Yuma will host the Anza Conference in February 2006.

Mike Taylor would like to report at next RAC meeting on the BLM's effort on the De Anza Trail. NPS Director of the Trail has met with the Governor and is willing to do a presentation for the RAC.

Mike also mentioned a presentation that is needed for the State Leadership Team on the RAC's expectations for tourism in gateway communities.

Tina mentioned the need for a RAC card-sized publication with an outline of recreation opportunities and contact numbers.

Diane mentioned that the BLM is nearing completion of a statewide recreation publication that will highlight National Landscape Conservation System units statewide, and will include the De Anza Trail. Tina would like a copy as soon as it comes out.

Sandee asked about BLM's involvement in the listening meetings for the Recreation RACs mandated by 2004 legislation. Mike Taylor said that Hal Hallet from the WO is the BLM's representative. Frances mentioned that there are some things that are really bizarre in the discussions, such as an annual contest (similar to Duck Stamp competition) for the annual visitor pass. It would be very expensive and not be very practical to have an annual contest and redesign every year. Sandee asked about how the RAC could provide comments or ideas; Frances said that time constraints limit RAC comments but that individual members can send their own comments.

**ACTION:** BLM will provide RAC members with National Landscape Conservation System publication when it is completed.

**AGENDA ITEM: Report from Wild Horse and Burro Working Group** (Frances Werner, Chair)

Mike Taylor handed out the WH&B Program Summary for FY 2005 and went over it with the RAC. Target of 300 animals; at 270 so far with one adoption left; should meet goal.

Removals – determined that our Herd Management Areas are at appropriate levels. We have removed 85 of 300 projected removals. The BLM is currently flying census on the Black Mts. – slightly below appropriate management level; good.

Proposed gather in Yuma area.

Sale Authority – Burns Amendment. Strict language about sale authority but some animals did go to slaughter house. One person sold horses to slaughterhouse; NW tribe sold horses to someone that sold to slaughterhouse. New language on third page of handout. Also included national statistics.

**DISCUSSION:** Pete Brawley commented that, several years ago, during a severe drought, cattle ranchers were reducing their herds and were concerned about burro numbers. They brought their concerns to the BLM and worked things out; showed good sense of cooperation.

**ACTION:** None

**AGENDA ITEM: Report from Land Use Planning and Tenure Working Group** (Glen Collins, Chair)

BLM Report on Land Use Planning was mentioned. Glen mentioned that he appreciated the opportunity to comment on concerns to make the plans more understandable to the general public.

Middle Gila Conservation Partnership – Managing motorized access from three different viewpoints. In 1998, several RAC members started working with the project when the BLM was presented with an application for a big OHV event in the area south of Florence Junction. Thousands of people from Phoenix area use the area for recreation, with 932 miles of roads. Glen handed out map of motorized access routes. Public started the process and brought the BLM TFO into the group. FS, ASLD was represented. The report concluded that the group should evaluate the motorized routes in the area, using Les Weeks evaluation process. Series of seven workshops in Phoenix and Mesa areas; group of 25 people with diverse backgrounds analyzed each route. Choices for each route were leave it open, leave it open but limit use, or close it.

One group wanted to protect the environment. One group was an access group. One middle ground group tried to come up with a compromise of the other two groups' views. Glen talked about how the three maps were hard to compare because it was hard to see road colors on land status background. The "protection group" that wanted to limit access wanted to close half of roads. The "access group" only closed 8 miles and left the rest (900+) open. The "middle group" recommended that 112 miles be closed.

Conclusions of report:

Highest and best use of BLM and FS lands are for public recreation and other uses.

Highest and best use of ASLD lands are for income producing and as a land bank for future generations.

This conflicts with the State's plans to sell all those State lands for residential development. Group recommends that State keeps those lands for public uses including recreation and mining.

Large block of lands should remain in federal and state ownership to be used for recreation, grazing, mining, etc. and should not be sold.

Glen commented that it was an inefficient process because there really wasn't a group leader, just a facilitator provided by the National Park Service's Trails Section. No decision makers involved.

1. The group wants to convey to ASLD to not sell the lands. Elaine has arranged meeting between ASLD, BLM, FS, National Guard, FWS, AGFD, and members of MGCP to discuss developing a coordinated access plan that would include keeping lands in public ownership. Glen complimented AGFD (Joan Scott and John Windes) and Tucson Field Office (esp. Francisco Mendoza) for their help.

2. Some involved in the process are a little disappointed that no decision was made at the end of the process because the group did not have any decision-making authority. In the interim, TFO can use the information in its decisions regarding OHV events and other commercial permits.

3. The group was successful at putting emphasis on developing a coordinated access plan; there are currently no easements or ROWs for roads.

4. Identified groups interest in keeping the area "yellow" and not using it as trading material to expand the Petrified Forest National Monument or other land exchanges.

5. Greatest threat to these lands are houses; commercial development of communities. Biggest threat is to State lands though there is some threat to BLM lands for exchanges.

**DISCUSSION:**

Steve commented that a group has put together State Trust Land Initiative that includes a list of lands that have them split into three categories. One category would be permanent public ownership. Steve wants to make sure that group's proposals are included in what the MGCP is proposing.

Sandee: Though there was not a leader, it was a huge step to have the public working together, forming their own group that eventually involved federal and state agencies. She commended Glen and other RAC members for their leadership in getting the group going.

Glen: OHV "open range" users need to be involved in the process.

Sandee thanked the BLM for allowing the RAC to move forward on this effort.

Frances asked if Bob had a copy of the map put out by the people proposing State land reform. Bob said that these lands were not included on their map.

Glen: Don't "label" lands on map as conservation uses only; some of these lands have commercial uses and they should also be available for OHV access. Consider a "land bank" for future generations.

Bob suggested approaching the counties to let them get ahead of the game, to include open space in planning efforts. Sandee said that they are already working with Pinal County. Keeping the National Guard there is also good to deterring development.

Steve mentioned that he has a copy of a map for the proposed protection in the Las Cienegas area. This is part of a ballot initiative. TNC is currently spearheading the \*Fox Group. Steve was disappointed that some of the lands around the Las Cienega are not identified for protection while parcels along I-10 that would be expected for development were included as protection areas. Most of the work on the initiative has been done behind closed doors. There hasn't been much of a public education component, and many people don't understand what state trust lands are. Sierra Club does not support the initiative. (\*The Fox Group was involved in a similar initiative in 2004.)

**ACTION: N/A**

**AGENDA ITEM:** Off-Highway Vehicle Use Working Group (Sandee McCullen, Chair)

Short meeting but productive. Identified the path the group wants to take in developing OHV use guidelines.

Motor Track Park representative Leah Benson would like to provide a formal presentation on the status of this OHV project and Recreation and Public Purposes Lease.

**DISCUSSION:** Mike talked about tiering down from the National OHV Strategy. Sandee will coordinate via email to get things started. Bill Gibson from BLM will be involved. Steve and Glen were supposed to help on group but their terms will be expiring. No other RAC members volunteered.

**ACTION:** Mike said that the BLM would provide staff to help develop the guidelines for OHV use.

**AGENDA ITEM:** Discussion of Future Meetings/Locations, BLM State Director and RAC members

Steve returned to Field Managers Report to discuss the stream gage on the San Pedro River that has registered the lowest reading ever in 70 years. Steve shared copies of two clippings. He mentioned the RAC's letter to Elaine regarding an Active Management Area for the San Pedro. There is a group working on a statewide ballot initiative to establish an AMA for the San Pedro. There is a growing concern in the community and statewide regarding handling the issue of growth in that area, or we are not going to save the river. Steve requested that the BLM provide a briefing on this topic at the next meeting. Steve also recommended the book by Robert Glennon called *Water Follies*. Some feel that the BLM is not doing enough to protect the water. There should be federal reserved water rights. Bill Civish also mentioned using BLM's instream flow water rights to stop groundwater pumping. Elaine mentioned that ASO is coordinating with the WO on this issue and it is currently under review, i.e. to get the Department of Justice to move forward to assert those water rights.

The BLM will provide an update at the next meeting. Jan also recommended inviting Tom Whitmer to the meeting to do a presentation.

Frances mentioned that the Rifle Range Study has not come out yet, but is promised "soon".

**AGENDA ITEM: Discussion on Future Meetings/Locations** (BLM State Director and RAC Members)

Topics:

- Update on 321 Report
- NPS Anza Trail report
- San Pedro water update
- Leah Benson on Motor Track Park
- Update from Don Applegate on recreation RRACs
- Grazing Utilization:

Frances asked Lamar if there should be a Powerpoint on utilization – if it can be shortened to 15-20 minutes, maybe even just for subcommittee with synopsis for full RAC. Jim Maynard offered to do it but needs 30 minutes. No decision made. Probably most appropriate for subcommittee meeting on Nov. 1.

**DISCUSSION:** Next meeting will be November 1-2 in Phoenix.

**ACTION:** We will wait until new people are appointed to RAC to set a date for the next meeting. *(The RAC meeting was rescheduled for December 5-6, 2005, due to the late appointments of the new RAC members.)*

Bill Civish said that he would come to the hotel tonight to lead those driving to Discovery Park for the dinner. Bill Brandau announced that the vans for the San Simon tour would be at the hotel at 6:15 a.m. and leave at 6:30 a.m.

**MEETING ADJOURNED at 4:23 p.m.**

*The Gila Watershed Partnership and BLM hosted a dinner that evening at Discovery Park. It featured a presentation by Kristine Uhlman about how NEMO (Nonpoint Education of Municipal Officials), a special UA program, in collaboration with Arizona Department of*

*Environmental Quality, can assist cities and counties with water modeling, GIS watershed mapping, and education and outreach about the connections between land use and water quality. Handouts were provided listing the NEMO website: [www.srn.arizona.edu/nemo](http://www.srn.arizona.edu/nemo)*

*On August 24, the RAC participated in an excellent tour of several public land areas in the Safford Field Office. The tour highlighted the San Simon Watershed, Hotwell Dunes Off-Highway Vehicle Use Area, and some of the areas paleontological resources. The tour was conducted from 6:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.*

## **FIELD MANAGER REPORTS**

### **Arizona Resource Advisory Council Meeting Consolidated Field Managers Report August 23, 2005**

#### **Arizona Strip District**

##### **1. SUBJECT: Legendary alligator captured on the Arizona Strip**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** Clem, the legendary 8-foot alligator once owned by rancher Chuck Simmons, was captured and relocated in mid-July at Pakoon Springs by the Phoenix Herpetological Society. When the Arizona Strip District acquired the 270-acre Pakoon Springs area in 2002, the transfer of deed agreement specified that the alligator living at this spring system in the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument could be relocated but not harmed. BLM and Arizona Game and Fish wanted to remove the alligator for public safety, ecological concerns, and because possession of an alligator is illegal in Arizona. Simmons, the former owner of Pakoon Springs, had released the alligator 19 years ago. Up until about 2002 he regularly fed Clem. Arizona Strip personnel did not actually confirm Clem was still alive until this spring. Media from St. George, Salt Lake City, Las Vegas and Phoenix all covered the capture and relocation. Clem was drastically underweight when he was captured. He is now enjoying an unlimited supply of chickens at the Society's sanctuary in Scottsdale.

##### **2. SUBJECT: California condor egg hatches in the Vermilion Cliffs**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** Biologists have confirmed the pair of condors nesting in the Vermilion Cliffs has a chick. This is only the fourth condor chick born in Arizona since the reintroduction began in 1996. It is the second at the BLM's Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, which also hosts the condor release site. Biologists believe a second pair, nesting at the Grand Canyon, also have a chick, but they have not been able to confirm this. The third pair of nesting condors in Arizona this year, which had a nest near BLM land on the Kaibab National Forest, did not have a viable egg. The chicks typically won't leave the nest until late fall. There are currently 54 condors in the wild in Arizona – about a fifth of the entire world population.

##### **3. SUBJECT: Severe fire season on western Arizona Strip**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** To date nearly 150,000 acres have burned on the Arizona Strip this year. Almost all of these acres are from the western side of the Arizona Strip in the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument. The effects to the desert ecosystem, including desert tortoise, and to permittees is expected to be severe. Arizona Strip personnel have developed a reseeding plan, but the challenge will be to minimize the amount of cheat grass that re-invades. The potential for additional large fires on the Strip remains high.

#### **4. SUBJECT: Arizona Strip Plan approaching public release**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** The final reviews are being conducted for the Draft EIS on the Management Plans for the Arizona Strip Field Office, Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument and Vermilion Cliffs National Monument. The Notice of Availability should be published in the Federal Register August 23, and public meetings held the last two weeks in October. Public meetings are planned for Beaver Dam, St. George, Kaibab Village, Page, Flagstaff, Kingman, Phoenix, Marble Canyon, and Las Vegas.

#### **5. SUBJECT: Grand Canyon Trust involved in Kane/Two Mile ranch management**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** Although the Grand Canyon Trust is not scheduled to close on their purchase of the Kane and Two-Mile ranches on the eastern Arizona Strip until September, they have taken an active role in their management. The Standards and Guides Assessment of the Sand Hills Allotment on the Two Mile Ranch was conducted on schedule, although the Trust pushed to have it postponed several years. BLM's position is to treat the Trust no differently than any other permittee, despite their active interest. The Trust is collecting their own monitoring data and have proposed modifying fences to be antelope friendly. BLM and Arizona Game and Fish see a higher priority in ensuring adequate water is provided for wildlife and cattle and continue to work with the Trust on this issue.

### **Phoenix District**

#### **1. SUBJECT: New Name Approved for Phoenix District**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** Bearing the mark of approval from Washington, the Phoenix Field Office is now the Phoenix District. Tentatively an Open House is proposed to announce the change after field managers are named. More details will be announced later.

#### **2. SUBJECT: Early Fire Prevention Efforts and New Fire Center Strengthen Community Ties**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** Extensive outreach in smaller communities bordering public lands prior to fire season established good community relations and is credited with significantly reducing impacts from wildland fires to local communities. This was clearly demonstrated in the areas outside of Wickenburg and in Yavapai County. While proactive fire prevention and fuels reduction efforts provided training exercises for new fire recruits, they also encouraged communities to participate in brush clean ups to establish defensible space. After a series of fires threatened communities, local residents saw first hand how important it is to have defensible space and praised BLM's efforts. In addition, during the fire season the new Weaver Mountain Fire, Aviation and Work Center was put to the test and passed with flying colors. The site offered a strong presence that reassured local residents and was key to assisting on calls. Of worthy note – response time to answer a call was significantly reduced due to the location and immediate access to the helicopter. In some cases time saved was as much as 30 to 40 minutes.

Fire impacts to the Agua Fria National Monument - As a result of the abundant winter precipitation and subsequent annual vegetation growth the Agua Fria National Monument had a very active fire season this summer. The fire season started in mid-May with the Basin prescribed fire that encompassed 2,880 acres. This hazardous fuel treatment was located between the Agua Fria River, Interstate 17, Bloody Basin road and Badger Springs road. While this prescribed fire was designed to meet vegetation objectives, in the end it also provided a protection buffer for the community of Cordes Lakes to the north of the monument. Shortly after the prescribed burn took place, the Sunset Point fire started on June 20, 2005. This fire encompassed 6,847 acres immediately south of the Basin prescribed fire, and threatened the community of Black Canyon City. After this fire the Lousy fire occurred and encompassed 3,000 acres of the monument and the Tonto National Forest. This fire would become part of the Cave Creek Complex; the second largest fire in the Southwest Area. The Basin prescribed fire formed a key part of the suppression strategy to protect the community of Black Canyon City and burnout operations would tie into the perimeter of the Lousy fire.

Quick Fire Statistics for the Phoenix District:

- a. Lightning starts = 12 (22,374 acres)
  - b. Human caused = 42 (62,131 acres)
- Total acreage burned = 84,559 (breaking or near the record for number of fires and acres burned)
- Fire season typically starts in January or February, but this year due to a wet winter, the fire season started in April when the new vegetation began to dry out. This year we experienced more fires and more acres burned in a compressed fire season.
  - Typically this District sees one Incident Management Team once every other year. This year there were six teams taking action in the fire zone.

Other Challenges:

- Higher number of “detailed” staff in the Dispatch Center and a steady flow of severity resources (unfamiliar engines)
- Fire Management – Zone FMO and AFMO were both unfilled positions covered by acting.

### **3. SUBJECT: Fire Closures Lifted**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** Due to the arrival of the monsoon season, closures for the Sonoran Desert National Monument (Sand Tanks, Area A) and the Hassayampa Wilderness Area have been lifted. The closure for the Agua Fria National Monument has been modified to open all areas except for Black Mesa, which will be reopened when the area receives re-growth. At this time, all cattle on the Agua Fria National Monument have been removed until forage conditions improve to allow grazing once again.

### **4. SUBJECT: Shooting Community Stepping Up to Resolve Issues Along Table Mesa Road**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** The Good Gun Foundation is very interested in keeping public lands open to shooting and has developed information on safe and responsible shooting etiquette on public lands. This organization also proposed co-hosting a National Public Lands Day event to clean up areas littered with spent shells and target debris along Table Mesa Road on Saturday, October 22.

### **5. SUBJECT: Minerals Generate One Million Dollars in Sales**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** The Bureau of Land Management Phoenix District remains in the top five throughout the Nation in the largest amount of mineral material sales. To date, the Phoenix District's mineral materials sales generated more than one million dollars. The vast majority of these materials are decorative rock. Total weight exceeds 1,200,000 tons. These sales are expected to surpass last year's total and with the current housing market this trend is expected to continue.

#### **6. SUBJECT: Friends of the Agua Fria National Monument Name New Leader**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** Julie Sherman, President of the Friends of the Agua Fria National Monument, will be taking on a new position out of state and will no longer serve as President. We wish her well in her new endeavors. Stepping up to fill this void is Dr. Peter Welsh. A Professor at the Arizona State University and Director of the Deer Valley Rock Art Center, Dr. Welsh is an advocate of the Monument and its many precious resources. The Friends of the Agua Fria National Monument announced this change at their first annual meeting on August 20, 2005. The meeting was open to anyone interested in learning more about caring for the monument. The Friends also sponsored a series of activities including a birding tour, ecological and archaeological presentations and conducted service projects throughout the early afternoon.

#### **7. SUBJECT: Update on Management Plans**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** Status update on management plans within the Phoenix District.

- The amendment to the Lower Gila North Management Framework Plan and the Lower Gila South Resource Management Plan was approved Friday, July 15. The amendment affects lands in the Phoenix and Colorado River Districts.
- Draft Painted Rock Business Plan is now posted to BLM national website and open to public comment, per Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act.
- Draft evaluation of Maricopa Complex Wilderness Management Plan assessing the success in implementing the plan is in the final review stage.
- Draft RMP / EIS for the Agua Fria National Monument / Bradshaw-Harquahala planning areas is also in the final review stages, with the anticipation of publication at the end of the fiscal year. Additional public meetings will be scheduled once the draft is published.
- Draft RMP / EIS for the Phoenix South and Sonoran Desert National Monument planning areas is still in the analysis phase and remains on schedule, with the goal to be published in fiscal year 2006.

### **Colorado River District**

#### **Kingman Field Office**

1. Kingman is completed a Land Use Plan evaluation the week of August 8, 2005. KFO reviewed their existing RMP completed in 1993, reviewed current decisions to see if still cover needs, looked for needed updates due to new issues or concerns. A revision of the land use plan will occur in FY 2008 or 2009.
2. The Kingman Field Office has experienced a very active fire season, lots of fuel from last year's rains.



## **Yuma Field Office**

### **1. SUBJECT: Resource Management Plan**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** Yuma Field Office hosted five public workshop meetings the week of July 25, 2005, to provide the public the opportunity to learn more about the resource management planning process underway for the Yuma Resource Management Plan (RMP) and an associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The meetings allowed the public to provide input regarding the preliminary draft alternatives. Each public meeting began with a brief overview of the RMP/EIS process. The balance of each session focused on receiving input from the public on the preliminary draft alternatives. The alternatives were developed using public input received during alternative development workshops held in March 2005. Discussion topics included transportation, recreation, biological resources, and land tenure. The workshops were held at Welton, Quartzsite, Yuma, and Tucson, Arizona and Blythe, California. Presently, 1.2 million acres of public lands located within the boundaries of BLM Yuma Field Office are being managed by three resource management plans and several plan amendments.

### **2. SUBJECT: Mittry BAER Project**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** Planting and seeding efforts are producing good results at the Mittry BAER site. The Mittry BAER site was burned by wildfire in 2003, and collaborative efforts have been used to stabilize the habitat within the site and treat the area for nonnative invasive plants. Extensive treatments including irrigation and planting have brought new life to an area devastated by fire. Mittry Lake is situated between the Imperial and Laguna dams on the Lower Colorado River and is cooperatively managed by the Bureau of Land Management, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and Bureau of Reclamation.

### **3. SUBJECT: Flat-tailed Horned Lizard Video**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** As part of the interagency group responsible for conserving the flat-tailed horned lizard, Yuma Field Office is taking the lead role in producing two educational videos to help educate Border Patrol and the general public about flat-tailed horned lizard. These videos will describe the natural history, threats, and measures that individuals can do to help conserve the species. The video, directed at the Border Patrol audience, will be incorporated into Border Patrol training programs.

### **4. SUBJECT: Cottonwood and Willow Forest Thriving**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** Yuma Field Office is maintaining a structurally diverse cottonwood and willow forest. In 1999, BLM removed 12 acres from an agricultural lease, and along with Bureau of Reclamation, restored the area with riparian vegetation such as cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*) and willow (*Salix gooddingii*, *S. exigua*). After 6 years of irrigation and growth, the vegetation now flourishes, and migrating birds, including the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher (SWFL) (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) use the restoration site. However, the willow and cottonwood trees are beginning to grow into a mature cottonwood-willow gallery forest that is devoid of an understory, which is unsuitable nesting habitat for SWFL. A structurally diverse forest promotes a higher diversity of birds. Consequently, BLM cut patches of trees in 2004 and 2005 within the forest to create a mosaic of tree structure. Our goal of creating a structurally diverse forest appears to be succeeding. An herbaceous layer is forming in some plots, and cut stumps are re-sprouting into a vigorous shrub layer. *Baccharis*, a

native shrub that naturally occurs underneath cottonwood and willow, are naturally establishing themselves in some cut plots.

## **5. SUBJECT: Yellow-billed Cuckoo Surveys**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** Yuma Field Office was instrumental at organizing efforts, securing funds, and establishing sites for yellow-billed cuckoo surveys, a federally-listed candidate species, along the Lower Colorado and Gila Rivers in 2005. With the assistance of Northern Arizona University and Bureau of Reclamation, the group has established 195 point counts throughout many riparian areas within the Yuma Field Office area. At least 1 cuckoo has been detected at every site, and a potential breeding pair at another site. Results of this study will help BLM prioritize areas to restore for yellow-billed cuckoo.

## **6. SUBJECT: Sears Point Rock Art Recordation Project**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** Yuma Field Office has developed a partnership with Arizona Western College (AWC) to record at-risk rock art sites in the Yuma Field Office. For this project, students from the AWC Geoscience and Anthropology departments are surveying and cataloging the petroglyphs at Sears Point. The project includes the use of GPS and digital photography for petroglyph documentation. The rock art catalog resulting from this project may well be the single most important tool for guarding against alterations or vandalism at Sears Point. In Fiscal Year 2006, the results of the rock art recordation project will be showcased at the Antiquities Centennial celebration and during Arizona Archaeology Awareness Month.

## **7. SUBJECT: Sears Point Ethnography Project**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** Yuma Field Office has received funding to hire a contractor to conduct an ethnographic study of Sears Point. The objectives of the ethnographic study are: (1) to identify and document traditional occupancy and use of the Sears Point area by Native American peoples; (2) to identify and document traditional stories connected to the Sears Point area; (3) to develop interpretive data for the Sears Point area features (petroglyphs in particular); and (4) to consult with the tribes on the future treatment of the Sears Point area. Information gathered will be used for interpretive development.

## **8. SUBJECT: Lower Colorado River Landscape Study**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** Yuma Field Office has received funding to conduct a landscape study of the Colorado River corridor inside the Yuma Field Office boundaries. The three reservations with land adjacent to the Yuma Field Office (the Cocopah Tribe, Quechan Tribe, and Colorado River Indian Tribes) will be invited to participate in this study. The objectives of the landscape study are: (1) to provide an overview of traditional occupancy and use of the project area by American Indian peoples; (2) to consolidate information for the study area from previous ethnographies; (3) to identify and document traditional places in the project area; (4) to include descriptions of the cultural significance of natural resources and physical environmental features at selected cultural landscape sites; (5) to identify place names, trails, and stories associated with places on the cultural landscape; (6) to identify and document contemporary uses of the project area; (7) to identify the functions of local archaeological features through ethnographic sources (particularly rock art, intaglios, trails, and other desert pavement features); and (8) to determine the need for future studies based on gaps identified in the historic and ethnographic record. Information gathered will contribute to the revision of the Yuma Field Office's Resource Management Plan and will be used to identify possible issues and concerns for future proposed actions.

## **Lake Havasu Field Office**

## **1. Subject: Lake Havasu Field Office Draft Resource Management Plan (DRMP) and Draft EIS Near Completion**

**Issue Summary:** The Lake Havasu Field Office DRMP/DEIS will be presented to the State Director for final approval to print and publish for comment on August 12. If approved, the document is scheduled to be printed and be available for public review September 16, 2005. The document will be available in print and electronically (on CD and internet website) for the 90-day comment period. In addition, in late-October five public meetings will be held in the LHFO area, along with two meetings in Riverside/San Bernardino, California and Phoenix.

## **2. Subject: PG&E Topock Update on Groundwater Contamination**

**Issue Summary:** Groundwater contamination (with hexavalent chromium, CrVI) at the Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) Topock natural gas compressor station near the Colorado River in Needles, CA, continues to be monitored closely by BLM.

As a corrective interim measure, PG&E is expected to complete construction this summer of an onsite treatment facility. The latest groundwater sampling (April 2005) indicated the plume of contaminated water was approximately 50 feet from the Colorado River, the same distance it measured in September 2004.

In October 2004, the California Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) ordered PG&E to increase pumping in existing wells and drill an additional well to increase extraction pumping to control the plume. Approximately 12.5 million gallons of contaminated groundwater was pumped from the wells between February 2004 and June 2005, and was treated and transported by truck to facilities in the Los Angeles area.

The project area contains a sacred site and BLM is in ongoing consultation with the nine potentially affected Tribes. The Fort Mojave Tribe met on July 21, 2005 with BLM State Director Elaine Zielinski and Lake Havasu Field Manager Tim Smith, to discuss enhancing communications among all entities, including the Tribe's position on future BLM actions for the project.

**BACKGROUND:** Since 1951, PG&E has operated the Topock natural gas compressor station along the Colorado River. The 265-acre site encompasses public land managed by three Departments of the Interior agencies (BLM, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Reclamation). The station discharged chromium-based corrosion and biological inhibitors used in the cooling towers into BLM-managed Bat Cave Wash until 1970. Groundwater sampling in 1995 detected significant concentration of hexavalent chromium (CrVI), a known carcinogen, onto PG&E and public lands.

The proximity of the groundwater plume to the Colorado River constitutes a potential threat of contamination of a significant water supply to Arizona and California. To address the contaminated plume and prevent release of CrVI into the Colorado River, interim removal actions were authorized by BLM in coordination with the California Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC).

Since February 2004, the interim actions have consisted of PG&E performing critical removal measures for hydraulic control of the CrVI plume with daily pumping, treating, transporting and disposing of the treated contaminated groundwater from the wells on public land, to facilities in Los Angeles. The onsite treatment hopefully will be operational in August 2005. This facility was designed and built for short-

term operation (5-10 years) when efforts to control the contaminated plume, and its release into the groundwater, are expected to be completed.

## **Gila District**

### **Safford Field Office**

#### **1. SUBJECT: Bonita Creek Fish Barrier**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) proposed construction of a fish barrier in Bonita Creek to meet U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) mitigation measures in the delivery of Central Arizona Project water to the Gila River basin in Phoenix. The Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area Management Plan endorses Bonita Creek as a possible barrier site to enhance the current native fish population by preventing upstream migration during a post-flood event. The proposal includes temporarily removing native fish and using a pesticide to kill nonnative fish for a short distance above the structure.

The Safford Mayor and some City Councilmen have raised concerns regarding effects the barrier might have on the City's ability to manage its current water delivery operations and could prevent them from further exercising their right waters for future needs. BLM managers have met with the Mayor and City Manager several times to discuss their concerns. On July 29, managers from the BOR, FWS, and BLM spoke with Mayor Green and Graham County Board of Supervisors Chair Drew John. The BLM and City of Safford agreed to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) detailing current and projected needs of the City's water system in Bonita Creek. The MOU will encompass necessary rights-of-way and possible Recreation and Public Purposes leases for the system. This MOU had been identified for completion through the Gila Box Management Plan. The BLM will write a Biological Evaluation, with the FWS completing the Biological Opinion on the MOU, proposed fish barrier, and potential T&E fish introductions. The public comment period for proposed fish barrier was extended two weeks, ending August 15.

#### **2. SUBJECT: Klondyke Road Closure**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** A private landowner in Klondyke, a small community of west of Safford, continues to block access along the Aravaipa-Klondyke Road. The road provides the only public access to the east end of Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness, The Nature Conservancy's Aravaipa Canyon Preserve, and other public and private lands. The gate has been locked since February. The BLM cannot issue wilderness permits for the east entrance unless the issue is resolved.

Talks between the private landowner and Graham County have been terminated. The landowner is trying to resolve an unrelated issue with the Sheriff's Office by locking this gate, and the County sees no reason to be involved since it is on private property. They have suggested that private citizens could file a class-action lawsuit against the landowner to force her to open the gate.

In the interim, the BLM Safford Field Office is coordinating with the Office of the Field Solicitor in Phoenix to explore other solutions to this problem. It could take years before access to the east end of Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness is restored, either through legal action or construction of an alternative route.

#### **3. SUBJECT: Aravaipa Ecosystem Management Plan**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** Progress on the Aravaipa Ecosystem Management Plan (EMP) continues. The Plan is being developed by the Safford Field Office in partnership with The Nature Conservancy and Arizona Game and Fish Department. There is high participation in the workgroups that formed after the public meeting; their topics are riparian/water quality, recreation, transportation/access, wilderness/special management areas, cultural resources/socioeconomics, wildlife, and uplands habitat, which includes grazing and prescribed fire. Participants in the seven workgroups coordinated in person and via email to formulate objectives and management actions for their specific area of interest. When completed, the Aravaipa EMP will provide guidance for 69,609 acres of public land around Aravaipa Canyon managed by the BLM and 7,802 acres in The Nature Conservancy's Aravaipa Canyon Preserve. The EMP will replace the 1988 Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness Management Plan and incorporate new management plans for three Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. A draft EMP is projected for 2006. RAC member Steve Saway is a member of the transportation/access group.

## **Tucson Field Office**

### **1. SUBJECT: Saginaw Hill Mine Site Update**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** The Tucson Field Office plans to fence, and administratively close, about 290 acres at Saginaw Hill to limit public access while soil and water samples are being analyzed, and to provide a safety zone in preparation for a clean up of the area. Soil samples taken after June 27 have revealed additional sites with high elevations of arsenic and lead from historic mining operations. BLM has fenced and placed signs at the areas determined to have highest levels of the toxic materials. About 27 mine shafts were filled in earlier this year to reduce the risk of physical hazards. A 20-acre site was administratively closed as well. The additional fencing, signs and closure will provide an additional safety barrier. There are some indications that the high levels of arsenic and lead are at ground level coming from a naturally occurring vein; however, soil testing indicates that the materials have not migrated from the 540-acre site. The BLM has briefed the office of Cong. Grijalva and Supervisor Bronson, and has consulted with Pima County Health Department, AZ DEQ, Pima County DEQ, and the Office of the State Mine Inspector.

### **2. SUBJECT: Stream Gage on the San Pedro River Runs Dry at Charleston Bridge**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** On July 8, 2005, BLM hydrologists reported that the stream gage at Charleston Bridge on the San Pedro River registered zero flow. This was the first recorded occurrence in 75 years. BLM, the USGS, and TNC surveyed the river to collect data that might indicate the cause. Recent storm events have restored the normal flows to the river; however, the community acknowledges that there is a water deficit. The goal of the Upper San Pedro Partnership that includes BLM is to meet the current and future needs of the population as well as the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area. The partnership seeks to develop a strategy for sustainable water yield.

### **3. SUBJECT: Section 321 Report goes to Congress**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** The Sec. 321 Report, outlining the Upper San Pedro Partnership's efforts to establish a collaborative water use management program in the Sierra Vista Subwatershed to achieve the sustainable yield of the regional aquifer and protect the Upper San Pedro River, and the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area has been forwarded to Congress by the Secretary of the Interior. The 2005 report is being drafted and is due to Congress by Oct. 31.

### **4. SUBJECT: ANALYSIS OF SAN PEDRO RIVER MAY YIELD REASONS FOR ZERO FLOW**

**ISSUE SUMMARY:** In reaction to the zero flow reading at the Charleston Stream gage in July, the BLM and its partners have been conducting additional testing and monitoring of the San Pedro River within the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area. The results of those analyses will be discussed at an August 22, meeting of the Upper San Pedro Partnership technical committee. The BLM has refrained from drawing any conclusions about the zero flows until all the science has been analyzed.